Metaphors and Fictions of Self-Preservation in *Il berretto a sonagli* and *Il giuoco delle parti*

But let us be clear; it is not because he wants limelight or applause (on the contrary, he would consider them vulgarities), but because he believes that the play is reality

(John Berger. G., A Novel)

Essential to any study on Pirandello’s work is the consideration of the fictionalizing motif (artistic creation) which dominates the playwright’s opus (Ó Ceallacháin; Styan). One of the ways by which the theme of “artistic creation” is integrated in the Pirandellian fictional world is through metaphor, word-play and “role-playing-within-the-role” (Hornby 67), with each one functioning as textual strategies by means of which the fictionalization of human action is thematized. This study focuses on two of Luigi Pirandello’s plays in the light of the fiction-making motif. Essentially, it attempts to confirm the notion that to interpret and organise life’s exchanges and scenarios aesthetically (by the use of metaphors, role-playing, word-playing, etc.) is tantamount to constructing a private world where the agent involved in said exchanges feels legitimated and is, therefore, in control of his or her life.

Prior to examining the texts within this light, I wish to foreground the theoretical framework and boundaries within which the analysis will take place. Thus, first I give an account of the surface theme of the plays; then the humoristic concepts of literary self-creation [“costruirsi”] and “avvertimento/sentimento del contrario” will be examined with reference to Umberto Eco’s “artistic consciousness” (Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* 167). Subsequently, the concepts of literary self-creation and “game metaphor” (Procaccini 57) will be introduced in relation to one another in order to illustrate that Luigi Pirandello’s concern in the two plays to be analyzed here is to be located in the self-legitimating and self-preserving fictional constructs (of the puppet and the egg) achieved through word-playing and role-playing.

Likewise, “play” and “game” in this study do not so much refer to game-playing in the traditional sense of sport or leisure, but are used as metaphors
meant to connote the essentially illusory and fictitious nature of lived experience (human activity) which strives to validate itself by means of aesthetic constructs which are themselves actualized within an agonistic context of theatrical role-playing and word-playing.

The philosophical, social and aesthetic exegesis of “play” as fiction-making will illustrate the existential significance of fictional self-creation within the context of human activity and, in reference to the plays to be analyzed, will aim at reminding us of Luigi Pirandello’s recurrent emphasis on the self-legitimating, yet at times precarious, function of fictional anthropogenesis.

_Il berretto a sonagli_ (1918) and _Il giuoco delle parti_ (1919) seem to be about adultery. Not surprisingly, like in many of the playwright’s dramatic works, the adultery theme, however integral to the plot, serves as a surface element by means of which is revealed a more profound consideration regarding the human condition.¹ In _Il berretto a sonagli_ for instance, the story ostensibly centers on Beatrice Fiorica’s public disclosure of her husband’s adulterous affair with Ciampa’s wife. And in _Il giuoco delle parti_ Leone Gala seemingly punishes his wife for her sexual transgression with Guido Venanzi.

Adultery is only the “tip of the iceberg.” Significantly, marital infidelity as a threat-generating strategy serves as a pretext for an examination of the self-legitimating fictional constructs in life which preserve human identity in times of great imbroglio. With this in mind, adultery will be considered as a threat to the self-legitimating and life-preserving symbols of the puppet and the egg; two metaphors embraced by the male protagonists (Ciampa and Leone) of _Il berretto a sonagli_ and _Il giuoco delle parti_ by virtue of which a fictional mode of existence is preserved which does not permit the contingent and embraces “textuality” instead.² Likewise, the puppet and the egg symbolize Pirandello’s notion of life’s dependency on artistic organization and thus reveal how fictional constructs offer us the discourse by which to stipulate our own legitimate invented microcosms.³ As a result, metaphorically laced discourse (puppet-egg symbolism) in these two plays is appropriated as a strategy of deception (Leone/Beatrice) and dissuasion (Ciampa) by means of which the fictional constructs which serve to protect the character’s sense of “self” (both Ciampa’s mask of unsuspecting cuckolded husband and Leone’s mask of indifference) remain intact.

Both _Il berretto a sonagli_ and _Il giuoco delle parti_ reveal the notion of the construction of identity once viewed within the re-inventive aesthetic atmosphere of word-playing, role-playing and double-entendre. Inasmuch as both texts focus on the processes of identity formation and world creation, this emphasis on identity and personal worlds is legitimated precisely in the aesthetic procedures of self-creation (discursive/theatrical) that each character adopts in an effort to construct and preserve him/herself fictitiously within a doxastic world of his or her own creation (δόξα). Accordingly, the surface theme of adultery unveils the fact that the process of fictional self-creation is, in essence,
a jocular literary process whereby experience is transformed into an aesthetic event, where characters (Leone, Ciampa, Beatrice, Silia) define themselves in terms of self-conscious word-playing or explicit role-playing.

In an article entitled “Building a Character: Pirandello and Stanislavsky,” Mary Casey writes that the idea behind Pirandello’s concept of “costruirsi” is precisely “the process by which man constructs the illusion of a coherent and unified identity in an attempt to hide the inconsistencies and uncertainties which lie beneath the surface” (50). In fact, many commentators and critics (Radcliff-Umstead; Oliver; Hornby; Caputi; Tuscano; Eco, The Limits; Lavan- chy; Günsberg, Patriarchal; Styan) discussing Pirandello’s notion of “costruirsi” articulate a unifying theme which is faithful to what Pirandello theorizes in his essay on L’umorismo; namely, that the phenomenon that the humorist exploits is an artistically constructed one, a fiction connoting theater-like or literary qualities, such as Ciampa’s puppet symbolism in Il berretto a sonagli, or Leone’s egg metaphors connoting perfection in Il giuoco delle parti. Likewise, to create and therefore re-invent oneself aesthetically is to impose willingly a fictional status upon individual experience. Bearing this in mind, the term “[‘costruirsi’]” signifies the literary process by which we as individuals in brute reality construct an alternative fiction, or fictions, of ourselves we wish to project outwards. Aesthetically speaking we are, therefore, the authors of our lives, constructing ourselves into character-types, attributing aesthetic textures upon experience.

The Pirandellian opus is fraught with literary icons who, because of some shattering experience — adultery for instance — resort to contriving for themselves and others an illusory personality by which they confront the contingent forces which plague them. A possible actualization of this aesthetic creation is achieved via role-playing. As Richard Hornby has noted in his insightful study on the aesthetic, social, and ideological causes of the meta-dramatic, to role-play is to assume “a role that is different from [the] usual self” (67) in order to reveal an ideal one. He writes furthermore that “[...] role-playing-within-the-role is an excellent means for delineating character, by showing not only who the character is, but what he wants to be” (67).4 Role-playing implies therefore a conscious attempt at self-knowledge insofar as it serves as a process with which to create a comfortable identity for oneself [“costruirsi”] while concurrently connoting a support system, which, at its deepest level, serves to sustain and authenticate the fictional self created by the individual.5 Accounting for the importance of fiction-making in life, Pirandello himself writes: “[...] la vita, non avendo fatalmente per la ragione umana un fine chiaro e determinato, bisogna che, per non brancolare nel vuoto, ne abbia uno particolare, fittizio, illusorio, per ciascun uomo” (L’umorismo 138).

Pirandello’s theoretical meditations on aesthetic creation are to be located in his essay L’umorismo (1908). In this treatise of artistic creation the dramatist articulates a fundamental dialectic, as well as a paradoxical interdependency,
between fiction and life,6 illusion and reality. Lived experience is recurrently theorized in aesthetic guise, ultimately constituting the life raft of life itself. Commenting on the literary nature of “costruirsi,” Ó Ceallacháin writes: “L’umorismo is principally concerned with defining and describing in detail Pirandello’s concept of humour as a literary phenomenon” (Dashwood 40). And Dante della Terza, in an essay entitled “On Pirandello’s Humorism,” observes: “Pirandello’s personaggio appears to be born under the sign of an everlasting illusion of survival” (36). Accordingly, only as a literary phenomenon that transforms experience into an aesthetic event is lived experience legitimated, and achieves a sense of coherency.

Evidence of the self-authenticating and self-preserving purpose of fictional constructs is doubtless to be found in an often quoted and much-referred-to passage in the L’umorismo essay. By way of the old lady symbolism, Pirandello explicates the significance of aesthetic creation and the concept of revealing the aesthetic disguise of human experience.7 Characteristically, the description of the “vecchia signora” [old lady], who on the surface provokes laughter, yet at a profound level exacts pity and sorrow, is illustrative of the belief that life emulates the “textuality”8 and stability of art, and that only as a construct is life justified. The “avvertimento del contrario” (“the perception of the opposite,” Eco, The Limits 166) is best exemplified in the initial impartial response elicited by the awareness of the exterior qualities of the “vecchia signora.” The recognition of these grotesque qualities as opposite characteristics of what in our mind an old lady should look like and the detached comic response provoked by them are a result of this objective response.

In addressing the function of reflection [“riflessione”] vis-à-vis the observed phenomenon, Eco, in his article “Pirandello Ridens,” has observed that when reflective thought has not intervened to dissolve the phenomenon and to probe into its psychology – to its raison d’être – “only a perception of the opposite” has occurred within the perceiver; thus, the resulting response is purely comic (The Limits 167). However, when reflection intervenes and deconstructs9 the image and transforms it into something else, “ecco che io non posso più riederne come prima, perché appunto la riflessione, lavorando in me, mi ha fatto andare oltre a quel primo avvertimento, o piuttosto, più addentro: da quell’avvertimento del contrario mi ha fatto passare a questo sentimento del contrario” (L’umorismo 126).

In his examination of the L’umorismo essay Eco illustrates that the concept “riflessione,” which is the intellectual process by which are unveiled the “reasons why the old woman masks herself under the delusion of regaining her lost youth” (The Limits 167), and therefore ultimately leads to the empathetic “sentimento del contrario,” denotes “artistic consciousness” (The Limits 167). Eco’s interpretation of “artistic consciousness,” therefore, presupposes reflective consciousness since it is by virtue of the reflective process that a sympa-
thetie identification (feeling of the opposite) between the subject perceiving and the phenomenon perceived is actualized. This being the case, once the perceiving "ego" contemplates the artfully concealed anguish of the object perceived, empathy and understanding are activated, whereby the "character is no longer separate from me; in fact; I try to get inside the character" (The Limits 167). Eco further emphasizes how the imagination, by virtue of reflection, exhibits an artistic operation which "semanticizes" in a profound way the perceived object: "Reflection [...] attempts to understand the reason why the old woman masks herself under the delusion of regaining her lost youth" (The Limits 167). Moreover, "Reflection [...] constantly blocks the imagination as if saying to it, Look here, you thought that the things that you created were just as you imagined them to be – perfect. But they could also be entirely different" (Eco, The Limits 166). Consequently, the "feeling of the opposite" which reveals profounder meanings about a given experience and is the emotional implication of conscious reflection (perception of the opposite), connotes aesthetic sensibility inasmuch as it generates empathy in the perceiving subject by means of unveiling the fictitious constructs comprising the phenomenon. Thus the "sentimento del contrario" presupposes those creative aspects of human consciousness which act as actions of meaning, exacting pity and uncovering the self-preserving fictions in life.

Bearing in mind that both Il berretto a sonagli and Il giuoco delle parti amount to a dramatization of the game-playing nature of experience, it seems plausible to comment upon the philosophical significance of the concept of illusion-making as it relates to human nature. The notions of "game" and "play" as fiction-generating phenomena have a distinguished philosophical tradition traceable to Plato. In Laws I Plato qualifies the productive society as one which has cultivated the concepts of play and pretense in its citizens:

I insist that a man who intends to be good at a particular occupation must practice it from childhood: both at work and at play he must be surrounded by the special 'tools of the trade.' For instance, the man who intends to be a good farmer must play at farming, and the man who is to be a good builder must spend his playtime building toy house; and in each case the teacher must provide miniature tools that copy the real thing. To sum up, we say that the correct way to bring up and educate a child is to use his playtime to imbue his soul with the greatest possible liking for the occupation in which he will have to be absolutely perfect when he grows up. (1337)

Plato's observations indicate a concern with how "play," as a mimesis of the actual world, prepares for a meaningful life in which we take delight in performing the duties of our profession. Thus, to guarantee a productive future in the actual human community one must resort to role-playing and fiction-making as strategies of preparation; that is, one must attempt to re-create illusory simulacra of the antagonistic nature of real life. Inasmuch as Plato's concern is
with the education of children and with the proper way to ensure their future membership in a social community the prosperity of which they will be part, the philosopher is inciting a pragmatic proposition about the benefits of fiction-making in society.

In the subsequent reference Plato argues that self-control (control over emotions, like fear and cowardice) in later life is only achieved when an individual learns to manage his everyday experiences through training:

A man has to fight and conquer his feelings of cowardice before he can achieve perfect courage; if he has no experience and training in that kind of struggle, he will never more that half realize his potentialities for virtue. Isn’t the same true of self-control? [emphasis mine] (1341)

Inasmuch as “play” creates a kind of preparatory simulacrum for the experiences one will encounter in life – such as the maintaining of a profession, the controlling of destructive emotions and that through playful simulation of the “real thing” one actually prepares for life – it seems likely that “training” is somewhat analogous to fiction-making since for their *raison d’être* both require pretence and a temporary alienation from the actual world: That is, the trainee, though not fully exercising his or her intended role in the actual world of experience, is nevertheless preparing for actuality through a fictitious re-enactment which offers the exposure to virtual non-actualized possibilities. Likewise, the social efficacy of “play” for Plato is justified in its pragmatic *τῆλος* [end] of edifying the individual for the realization of his or her practical, emotional and intellectual potentialities in the real world. With regard to Plato’s notion of play’s social function, Sura P. Rath, in an article entitled “Game, Play, Literature: An Introduction,” writes: “For Plato, play is peripheral and even unnecessary for human life unless it prepares us for life, and we should judge play by how it instructs us” (4).

As follows, there is detectable one important function of play which Plato advocates in relation to human experience: the self-legitimating, pedagogic teleology of play, which, by virtue of a fictitious re-enactment of the real, prepares for life, thereby allowing for the exercising of our intellectual abilities within a context of pretense and appearance.

Whereas Plato views “play” and “life” as occupying and operating within distinct boundaries where the fictitious re-enactment of human experience prepares us for life, but does not necessarily constitute the real experience itself, Pirandello perceives a fusion between life and illusion. Fiction-making, role-playing and pretense no longer denote the games of recreation and preparation which in Classical Greece were distinct from actual life. Within the metaphysical uncertainty of a Post-Traditional world where truth can no longer be seen as corresponding to a fixed and unchanging social reality since the latter does not exist, the concept of game has come to denote an eternal process of illusion and
fiction-making which duplicates and gauges the elusive nature of our relationships and the crisis of modern consciousness. Likewise, the boundary between illusion and what is real is intermeshed, revealing life's dependancy on fictional constructs rather than eternal truths. Consequently, a modern realization has set in regarding the lack of those legitimating beliefs which held Plato's conception of the world in tact, and which accordingly rendered possible his impartial reflections on life and fiction-making. With regard to his own awareness of the metaphysical rift in "modern consciousness," Pirandello writes: "Manca affatto alla nostra conoscenza del mondo e di noi stessi quel valore obiettivo che comunemente presumiamo di attribuirne. È una costruzione illusoria continua" (L'umorismo 147). Pirandello therefore believes that life itself is a fiction to be constructed, a game to be played and a mask to be worn.

However disparate the classical and modern concepts of fiction-making are vis-à-vis human experience, this disjuncture is essentially ontological: That is, while the significance of Plato's fiction-life analogy is its reference to the actual world of everyday experience which is alienated from the fictional world once illusion has served its purpose of edification and preparation, the essence of Pirandello's fiction-life analogy is its identification with the actual world, namely its re-organizing and intermingling of the ontological boundaries between the actual world as lived and the actual world as interpreted through fiction. Thus, for Pirandello the world is essentially a fiction.

On a pragmatic level, however, both the Platonic and Pirandellian analogies are similar insofar as they seem to be bound by the epistemological notion of the validity of fiction-making's purposive, knowledge-yielding, self-legitimating and self-preserving functions. Likewise, Plato's philosophical stance locates the efficacy of fiction-making in its offering a sense of future purpose and mastery over both life and profession. Accordingly, Pirandello dramatizes role-playing and fiction-making as both a temporary escape from the contingent and as a perpetual construction ["costruirsi"] which adds meaning and purpose to life. As will be shown, Silia's temporary role-playing at the end of the first act legitimates her plot and adds momentary validity to her otherwise meaningless existence. Ciampa's references to puppets and to social chords of appropriate behavior and discourse all serve to add a sense of continuity to his life. Moreover, Leone's mastery over his emotions is legitimated only within the framed context of a politics of playing his game of aloofness. Thus, these characters all incorporate the self-preservation and legitimation which are consigned to them by the game. From all this we can coincidentally infer that for Plato, as for Pirandello, the concept of fiction-making is both natural and necessary to man as it serves a self-sustaining function: To legitimize life, and impose upon it a sense of purpose and continuity.

The play-life analogy is studied further in contemporary social theory, and the results of this inquiry reveal a fundamental connection between fiction-making and lived experience. This connection depends on the emancipating
nature of play as a form of human creativity that establishes a temporary "monde renversé" (Eco, "The Frames" 2) in which all is permitted and where transgression of convention is fictionalized. For this reason contemporary game theorists associate play with that creative aspect of human nature which compels us to interpret experience aesthetically in order to survive the actual world. S. Rath makes the following observation: "Cultural anthropologists have suggested that play fulfills a culture’s dual need to express itself in artistic forms and to revitalize itself against extinction" (3). Roger Caillouls locates the social efficacy of games in the latter’s offering of an impromptu illusory framework by which humankind understands how to impose order upon contingency. Thus, in the extent to which “he is influenced by play, man can check the monotony, determinism, and brutality of nature. He learns to construct order, conceive economy, and establish equity” (58). Moreover, in a definition recalling Pirandello’s notion of literary world-creation, Caillouls outlines the fictitious nature of play: "[...] play is a way of substituting ideal situations for the confusion of contemporary life. One escapes the real world and creates another through play." (58) And lastly, “All play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not an illusion, then at least a closed, conventional, and in certain respects, imaginary universe” (19).

Eco examines the social and existential importance of “carnival” and stipulates that “The idea of carnival has something to do with comic” and that it reflects a publically shared belief in the existence and transgression of rules (“The Frames” 1). He explains carnival in reference to a “violation of a rule” or an “authorized transgression” or “parody” (“The Frames” 6) of some socially accepted norm in “real” life. Carnival presupposes and parodies “real” life within “frames” or stipulated contexts which bring into existence a comic simulacrum of the actual world. Laws, codes of conduct, and beliefs that inform an entire society can, according to Eco, be trivialized, parodied and transgressed by carnival as long as it is “authorized.” By “authorized” Eco means that the fiction/life contrast must be operative at the time of a carnival, and that when “carnivalization” (fictionalization) is imbedded within the frame of the actual world, this fictional practice must be publically acknowledged and sanctioned as such. In this sense, Eco argues that carnival and the comic are a form of social control which allow a society to transgress playfully rules of the actual world within the safe refuge and solace of a framed fiction. However, when “carnivalization” appears unexpectedly in a unauthorized manner, “frustrating social expectations,” it may be perceived as a revolutionary act because the actual world will be seen as having been unwarrantedly invaded by a structureless event. In other words, unexpected carnival introduces an element of equivocation, ambiguity and uncertainty in the social frame since it (unexpected carnival) denies the existence of its own fictional frame and takes for granted the actual one. In exposing “carnival” as a rule governed human activ-
ity that must operate within the life/fiction dichotomy and as an instrument of social control actualized within a fictional frame. Eco confirms how fiction does indeed replace "real" life and temporarily cancels contingency by imposing a new order and a new sense upon experience.

In *Il berretto a sonagli* the main protagonist, Ciampa, also operates within a fictional frame, and organizes his life according to an aesthetic and highly theatrical game metaphor: the puppet, or as he calls it, his "pupo." It is within the imaginary frame of the puppet construct Ciampa operates in an effort to impose meaning upon his otherwise haphazard existence; in essence, he is paradigmatic of how pretense is conducive to self-control and to an emotional balance in life. For without the existential certainty offered by constructs, life itself becomes a facsimile. With regard to the counterfeit existence which results without legitimating fictions, Radcliff-Umstead observes:

What the majority of Pirandello's characters fear is the threat of dispersion into the nothingness that oppresses their lives. For without the shield of a mask or a puppet identity, those characters are as insubstantial as fleeting shadows, mere phantoms [...]. (297)

Ciampa operates within the humoristic mode of existence, projecting a token personality (of the unsuspecting cuckolded husband) to the world, but artfully concealing, with the aid of his puppet (his "public mask") and carefully chosen discourse of social paradigms, the chaos and the rage internally afflicting him: The fact of being a cuckold husband ("marito tradito"). As long as the mask of respectability is in place, Ciampa's illusion is preserved. Playing within the Sicilian code of conduct — essentially a role-playing and fiction-assuming doxastic world — Ciampa is not bothered that the townspeople may suspect him to be a cuckold since appearances rule. And as long as he feigns ignorance as to the putative adultery, all is intact. Comparable to Leone Gala, he is aware of the game-playing proportions of lived experience, but unlike Gala, he has not achieved inalienable detachment from contingency in a way as to allow him to disregard public opinion absolutely. It is this anxiety with regards to public opinion which prompts him to warn Beatrice of the dangers of revealing family secrets that ought to be kept hidden from public scrutiny. When Ciampa's secret is revealed by Beatrice (II,v), his reproach to her is that she exposed publicly the possibility that he knew of his wife's affair (the pretense). This is tantamount to exposing his inner self, the "reality" of his life which he covered in a veil of fiction. Accordingly, in his condemnatory speech to the female character he outlines that out of respect for his fiction of ignorance she should have felt the need to keep the private and public versions of his (Ciampa's) "self" distinct: "Lei deve provarmi che uno, uno solo, signora, in tutto il paese potesse sospettare di me quello che lei ha creduto! Che uno, uno solo potesse
venire a dirmi in faccia: — "Ciampa, tu sei becco e lo sai!"” (II, v). Accordingly, what seems to matter to Ciampa is that the townspeople not be aware that he himself is aware of the adultery and is concealing it. Contemplating this aspect of the play, André Rochon writes, “Il n’est pas infamant d’être trompé, de le savoir, ni que les autres le sachent; mais il est infamant que les autres sachent que vous le savez” (587). This carefully constructed artifice circumscribing Ciampa’s private and public selves Beatrice Fiorica will soon subvert, exposing his well-kept secret.

The play’s subversive atmosphere immediately is established in an assembly of women who have gathered to discuss punitive actions against male infidelity. Beatrice Fiorica, whose husband is being unfaithful with Ciampa’s wife Nina, is being tempted by the Saracena, the town gossip, to achieve vindication. Regardless of warnings from La Fana the maid, Beatrice sets a trap for her husband and the other woman; both are found together in flagrante and the adultery becomes public. However, when orchestrating this vendetta Beatrice did not consider (because she was not aware of) Ciampa’s fictional frame, nor did she play the game of mutual self-respect to which he was repeatedly alluding with reference to the “tre corde” symbolism (three paradigms of behavior implying three discursive modalities). Thus, on account of the public disclosure of the adultery, Ciampa is exposed as a cuckold. Consequently, his well-ordered life (artifice) is shattered. Thus outraged and “smascherato” (unmasked), he threatens to kill according to the Sicilian code of conduct. But as luck would have it, he gets an idea that would secure everyone’s social roles and even avoid a killing. He publicly denounces Beatrice mad and has her act out the role of madness, thus avoiding a killing and securing his social identity as “marito rispettato” (respected husband). Once Beatrice is labeled demented the scandal will be interpreted as an irrational display of madness or hysteria undeserving of public scrutiny, resulting in Ciampa’s reacquisition of his fictional world.

Bearing in mind that literary self-creation denotes a system of preservation which imposes “textuality” upon contingency, Ciampa’s references to puppets and social chords are metaphors for aesthetic order, while Beatrice’s unwarranted exposure of the adultery symbolizes a distinct chaos and threat to this syntax. The puppet as a metaphor for self-legitimation and preservation is validated in Ciampa’s recurrent attempts to dissuade Beatrice from carrying her plan to fruition once he suspects what she is contemplating. In what will amount to a linguistic power struggle, each character uses language as a covert means by which to control the situation. As Dorothea Stewans has observed, linguistic play in Pirandello’s theater is defined usually as the power of one character to control and “distribui[re] agli altri le loro parti” (32). Consequently, ambiguous discourse, obscure references and symbolically loaded language will create the forum in which Ciampa and Beatrice will wage their role-
playing and word-playing war. Since there is a clear opposition between two forces attempting to impose control upon the other, the action of the play can be seen in terms of a dialectic: the struggle between Ciampa’s discursive attempts to impress upon Beatrice the legitimacy and fragility of fictions (his puppet-social chord constructs), on the one hand, and her absolute disregard for his fiction, on the other.

After the initial three scenes have passed in which Beatrice already has set her vendetta in motion, in the fourth scene Ciampa enters. Paradoxical epithets denoting intelligence, dementia, acuteness of vision and a dose of paranoia delineate the stage directions announcing his entrance: “due larghe basette tagliate a spazzola gl’invadono le guance fin sotto gli occhi pazzeschi, che gli lampeggiano duri, acuti, mobilissimi dietro i grossi occhiali a staffa. Porta all’orecchio destro una penna” (I, iv). With these stage directions the text offers a psychological profile of a character to be reckoned with, and in light of Beatrice’s intentions, the play sets in motion the dramatic conflict that will result in Ciampa’s role-distributing status and Beatrice’s ultimate embracing of an alternative “self.”

This tension is soon set in motion as Beatrice, unable to hide her resentment towards Nina, Ciampa’s wife, and her husband’s lover, resorts to what Paolo Puppa has labeled “un linguaggio allusivo-enigmatico”:

La lingua di Beatrice si attarda nei registri dell’allusivo con toni strascicanti, cantilenati, che richiedono un colore, insomma un’accentuazione sul piano non del messaggio ma dell’enunciazione. In pratica, l’eloquio di Beatrice coagula intorno al fantasma della moglie dello scrivano. (78)

This notwithstanding, Ciampa addresses Beatrice with the deference an employee normally addresses an employer, thus playing his game of unsuspecting husband and humble servant in the Fiorica household: “Bacio le mani alla mia signora/Esposto ai commandi della signora” (I, iv). Ciampa turns on his famous “corda civile” (civil chord) which, being now only a deferential use of language stipulated in the context of his own doxastic world, will become a metaphor he will use later to refer to the mask of mutual respectability required when living in a social community. Undoubtedly, Ciampa’s language and use of signifiers denoting humility and deference, along with his gestures of compliance, construct a highly stylized persona being projected in the Fiorica home: “... esposto ai commandi – oltre che dovere mio, qua, da umile servitore” (emphasis mine). Carefully chosen words, therefore, accompany role-playing gestures in order to signify effectively his eternal reliance on fiction and play. Beatrice, however, driven by vendetta, is incapable of concealing her plan successfully, and willingly surrenders to the temptation of playing with Ciampa by resorting to, as Puppa rightly illustrates, double entendre phrases, concur-
rently concealing and revealing her intentions by loading her signifiers with multiple points of reference. Thus, to Ciampa’s deferential role-playing she responds sarcastically with, “Eh, via! Servitore, voi? Padroni tutti siamo qua, caro Ciampa, senza distinzione: voi, Fifì, mio marito, io ... vostra moglie.” (I, iv). She classifies under the category “padroni” all the subject predicates (“voi”; “Fifì”; “mio marito”; “io”; “vostra moglie”) with particular emphasis on Ciampa’s wife in an effort to infer, not only the moral implications of Nina’s adulterous affair, but to reveal further how titles of power and prestige (“padrona di casa”), which Beatrice no doubt embraces and believes in as a bourgeois wife, are undermined by adultery. Thus Beatrice draws attention to Ciampa’s wife indirectly within a context of ambiguous statements and judgements of which Nina, according to Ciampa, should have no part. In fact, he immediately attempts to question Beatrice’s inference by interrogating her: “Permettete, signora? Lei ha nominato anche mia moglie?” (I, iv). Obviously Ciampa suspects that his wife may be having an affair with Beatrice’s husband, for why else would he take offence? The fact of Ciampa’s suspicion of the alleged adultery is inferred furthermore by La Fana’s response to La Saracens’s inference that Ciampa knows yet feigns ignorance: “Voi siete pazza! Che volete dare a intendere alla signora, che Ciampa sa tutto a si sta zitto?” (I, i). Beatrice’s unwarranted remarks thus threaten Ciampa’s doxastic world since the latter is built upon the illusion of a happy household free of sexual transgression. To ensure this phantasm Ciampa sets out to itemize one among many dicta he lives by: “Marcio con un principio: Moglie, sardine ed acciughe: queste, sott’olio e sotto salamoja; la moglie, sotto chiave. Eccola qua!” (I, iv). For Ciampa it is more important that he give the appearance of conjugal control than to exercise actual control. In doing so, he hopes to quell any suspicions Beatrice may harbor as to the possibility of his living consciously with the shame of his wife’s wrong-doing.

A further example revealing Beatrice’s linguistic play and her unwillingness to play Ciampa’s game of mutual respect is her reference to certain women (“certe donne”) who don the mask of innocence. Instead of signifying openly Ciampa’s wife, she says: “Ah, non tutte, no: certe donne! Perché cert’altre poi ce n’è, che sanno prendervi con le buone e farsi manse, [...] anche se vengono dalla strada” (I, iv). The objective of this speech, not to mention the goal of all of Beatrice’s ambiguous propositions, is not so much to provoke a destructive response from Ciampa, for that would ultimately be self-defeating. For her plan to work, she must “keep Ciampa in the dark,”, so to speak. But as we have seen, Beatrice’s actions are not reflective of caution. Her desire to control the situation absolutely is so intense that she is misguided in thinking that Ciampa is unable to detect her ambiguous double-talk. Rather than referring to signifieds (Nina; her knowledge of the adultery with her husband; her plot to send Ciampa away so as to execute her plan more effectively) which
should be stipulated only within the paradigm of the serious chord in *private*, Beatrice exploits the belligerent discourse of the serious paradigm ("corda seria") in *public*, thereby jeopardizing her ultimate victory and frustrating Ciampa. Therefore, at the level of her speech act, Beatrice’s propositions to Ciampa reflect a transgression of the use of the context-specific nature of language. In transgressing the boundaries of context and appropriate language use she is emitting ambiguous statements to Ciampa, who at this point in the dramatic action, is riddled with suspicions as to Beatrice’s intentions. The reasons for this unwitting sabotage on the part of Beatrice are to be located in the power and control she has achieved by virtue of linguistic play.

As is suggested by Dorothea Stewens, inasmuch as the use of discourse signifies a privileged power-position, Beatrice’s ambiguous doubletalk, which essentially exploits the signification process by disclosing information inappropriately, allows her to perpetuate her “performance,” thus serving a self-preserving and self-legitimating need: that of providing her with the semiotic means by which to exercise control both over the situation and Ciampa. As a result, the more ambivalent in her references, the more intense become Ciampa’s interrogations and the more Beatrice feels empowered in her new-found role of manipulator. Accordingly, through double-entendre which establishes multiple reference points and compromises the message at the level of intention, thereby bedeviling Ciampa’s well-ordered life by not allowing him to discern whether Beatrice is referring to universals (adultery in general) or particulars (Nina’s adultery with Beatrice’s husband), Beatrice legitimates her revengeful actions, assumes the roles of victim/avenger of her husband’s adultery and ultimately achieves a power position which accords her absolute mastery over the situation. Unquestionably Beatrice’s linguistic performance in front of Ciampa, as Silia’s role-playing masquerade in *Il giuoco delle parti*, signify strategies of power acquisition and self-legitimation by means of a recourse to fictional re-invention. As a result of her lust for power by means of ambiguous discourse and role-playing, the female protagonist is ensuring the fact that she can include Ciampa in her plan while concurrently playing with his emotions. In fact, she orchestrates this entire performance in front of Ciampa so as to exact vengeance upon her husband and his lover (Nina) by using Ciampa as a pawn. Unbeknownst even to her, however, she believes Ciampa can be removed from the scene: “Ciampa, ce lo leviamo dai piedi” (364), she says earlier to La Fana.

In response to Beatrice’s semantic ambiguity, Ciampa, who by the middle of the second act is aware of her motives, resorts to his own brand of ambiguously calculated word-play with which he outlines, however opaquely, his role-playing position and demonstrates the respect his puppet and everyone else’s demands. In all his cryptic attacks Ciampa will infer that he is actually playing a role and is operating within a paradigm of respect, the “corda civile.” However,
at one point he says that the "corda seria" should be turned on so they may both speak candidly in private: "Mandi via subito il signor Fiff ... La prego anch’io, signor Fiff: se ne vada" (I, iv). Knowing full well how each experience in life presupposes a specific context which requires an appropriate use of discourse, Ciampa attempts to open dialogue by inferring the activation of the discourse of the serious chord paradigm in private – which incidently Beatrice has been using and will use incorrectly by applying it in public. In other words, Ciampa wants Beatrice and himself to operate within a semiotic system of seriousness in private, where Beatrice can articulate conspicuously her signifieds (which are Nina, the adultery, her rage, her vendetta, her plan to send Ciampa away, etc.) without compromising his public mask. Therefore, Ciampa’s theatrical gestures of switching chords and adjusting his speech, which signify the switch from public to private discourse, are indicative of his awareness of his wife’s transgression, of Beatrice’s plans, and of the awareness of the masks we wear and of the linguistic codes we use to express these masks. The “corda seria,” like the “corda civile,” is a code offering Ciampa a structure of communication with which to express the symbols and images (puppets, masks, rigid codes of behavior) which for him constitute the justification of his doxastic world. With these symbols he is able to announce to everyone the public/private self dialectic. As we will see, however, Beatrice disregards Ciampa’s grammar and ultimately transgresses the rules of the game.

To Beatrice’s inferences Ciampa answers with the following remarks: “Oh Dio mio, non sono le parole, signora! Non siamo ragazzini! Lei vuole farmi intendere sotto le parole qualcosa che la parola non dice” (I, iv). Being self-conscious of how social setting determines intention, Ciampa is aware of the context-specific nature of linguistic meaning and that it can be used to conceal and to reveal intentions. Accordingly, he detects the misuse of the signification process as used by Beatrice. Subtly reproaching her (within the civil chord discourse) for her reluctance to access the discourse of the serious chord in private, he engages further in a metaphoric-type discourse in which he alludes to the self-preserving function of fiction-making: “L’uomo considera la donna che ha bisogno di prendere aria alla finestra; la donna considera l’uomo che ha bisogno di chiudere la porta” (I, iv) (emphasis mine).

The formal operation of metaphor as a rhetorical use of discourse is to link the similar to the dissimilar in order to call into being a newly constructed world or state of affairs. “Porte chiuse” and “finestre aperte,” when inserted within Ciampa’s doxastic world of appearances, become one of the driving forces reflecting the politics of appearance. Attributing to “porte chiuse” the signified “Ciampa’s social duty,” where the closing of doors ostends the actions of a conscientious husband, and to “finestre aperte” the signified “Ciampa’s duty to his wife,” where opening the window allows him to disclose his magnanimity, and then contextualizing these categories (“porte chiuse” =
social duty / "finestre aperte" = conjugal duty) within Ciampa’s fictional frame of the unaware betrayed husband executing his duty for the sake of public consumption, the closing and opening of doors and windows achieves a symbolic meaning which is validated exclusively in Ciampa’s fictional world of appearances, hence revealing how Ciampa’s exploitation of these actions validates the politics of appearance and consequently sustains his fictional world of unsuspecting betrayed husband.

At the level of the fiction-play-life similarity, the signifiers “porte chiuse” (closed doors) and “finestre aperte” (open windows), along with their signifieds of social conjugal duty, when considered metaphorically, connote the ludic processes in the actual world (informed by the politics of appearance) which secure Ciampa’s fiction of respected husband within his doxastic world of unaware betrayed husband: Fiction and life not only complement each other, but actually become identified with one another, becoming one and the same. His social “obligation” as the puppet-husband who plays at closing doors while performing the token ritual of conceding to his wife temporary freedom through windows, undoubtedly ensures the fiction (framed pretense) of the socially respected husband fulfilling a marital duty for the sake of public consumption (actual world). Thus by closing the door ("porta") yet concurrently allowing ostensible freedom through the window ("finestra"), Ciampa operates within the doxastic fictional microcosm as the conscientious husband pretending to be unaware of any wrong-doing on the part of his wife. In doing so, he is able to assume the excuse, as the text reinforces in I, i, of “looking the other way” ("lui volta le spalle e se ne va da sé"), thereby quelling any public suspicions as to the possibility of his knowing.

In what is likely one of the most notorious passages of the play illustrating further how self-preservation is achieved via an imposed exile into fictional worlds, Ciampa says:

Pupi siamo, [...] lo spirito divino entra in noi e si fa pupo. Pupo io, pupo lei, pupi tutti. Dovrebbe bastare, santo Dio, essere nati pupi così per volontà divina. Nossignori! Ognuno poi si fa pupo per conto suo: quel pupo che può essere o che si crede d’essere. Perché ogni pupo, signora mia, vuole portato il suo rispetto, tanto per quello che dentro di sé crede, quanto per la parte che deve rappresentare fuori. (I, iv) [emphasis mine]

In her analysis of the puppet imagery in Pirandello’s theater, Sister Corona Sharp isolates four metaphoric levels of the puppet symbolism in Pirandello.\footnote{14} We can make use of two: The second metaphorical level is mimetic in nature, as “man can be seen as an imitation of a puppet, pulled about by external forces” (28). The third one, which she claims is of “a psychological significance,” refers to how “man makes his own puppet, namely his public mask” (28). In Ciampa’s preceding monologue the third metaphorical level is present insofar as
there is an overt claim with regard to how the creation of additional layers of fiction (masks, puppets) serves to preserve the mask of respectability in a social context. In the subsequent speech the second metaphoric level is detected as Ciampa resorts to outlining his theory of social chords, themselves metaphors for the constructs which serve to preserve a sense of "self":

Deve sapere che abbiamo tutti come tre corde d'orologio in testa. La seria, la civile, la pazza. Soprattutto, dovendo vivere in società, ci serve la civile; per cui sta qua, in mezzo alla fronte. – Ci mangeremmo tutti, signora mia, l'un l'altro, come tanti cani arrabbiati. – Non si può. – Io mi mangerei – per modo d'esempio – il signor Fifi. – Non si può. E che faccio allora? Do una giratina così alla corda civile e gli vado innanzi con cera sorridente, la mano protesa: – 'Oh quanto m'è grato vedervi, caro il mio signor Fifi! – Capisce, signora? Ma può venire il momento che le acque s'intorbidano. E allora ... allora io cerco, prima di girare qua la corda seria, per chiarire, rimettere le cose a posto, dare le mie ragioni, dire quattro e quattro 'otto, senza tante storie, quello che devo. Che se poi mi riesce in nessun modo, sferro, signora, la corda pazz, perdo la vista degli occhi e non so più che faccio. (I, iv)

Ciampa, who at this moment emphatically echoes Pirandello’s notion of the implicit theatricality in life, moreover expresses the idea that human behavior is regulated by artifice and play. Bearing in mind the jocular and highly stylized imagery evoked by his self-conscious gestures of switching the chords and appropriately modulating his level of discourse to fit the context – “Do una giratina così alla corda civile e gli vado innanzi con cera sorridente, la mano protesa: – ‘Oh quanto m’è grato vedervi, caro il mio signor Fifi!’” – it must be stressed that in addition to denoting how role-playing incarnates human behavior along general lines, these paradigms (chords) of behavior, as they also involve the actualization of a specific illocutionary act (deference, seriousness, madness), concurrently reinforce the idea that idiosyncratic language-use is constitutive of our doxastic worlds in its offering us the metaphors with which to make sense of lived experience. Thus Ciampa’s chords can be seen not only as behavior moderators but also as discursive adjusters, dictating the mode of language to be adopted for the appropriate situation. In fact, after delivering his long speech on chords (I, iv), Ciampa, in conformity with his theatrical nature, shows Beatrice how to exploit the context-specific nature of language so as to avoid equivocation: “Perché lei, signora, qua – permette? – su la tempia destra, dovrebbe dare una giratina alla corda seria per parlare con me a quattr’occhi, seriamente: per il suo bene e per il mio!” (I, iv).

According to the “game-text” theory (Foust), the “logos game” (Foust) can be used as an attention-getting device which attempts to articulate something of paramount importance to both reader and character. The “logos game” is, therefore, a self-conscious language game referring to its own discursive modalities in an effort to emphasize the creative powers of language (Foust 9). Interestingly enough, this analogy is played out between Ciampa and Beatrice
in the extent to which the former is trying to capture Beatrice’s attention by resorting to a narcissistic strategy which calls attention to the relationship between his metaphorical use of language (the discourse of the three social chords, modes of behavior), theatrical role-playing (puppets of respectability), and real events (the threat of adultery). As mentioned earlier, from the standpoint of speech-act theory, Ciampa is revealing to us and Beatrice both the context-specific nature of language and the puppet image as metaphors for fiction-making. In doing so, Ciampa reveals a desire to demonstrate the relationship between the language we use, the context we use it in, and the fictions that we create on account of this union. So Ciampa qualifies further his dissuasive rhetoric to Beatrice by overtly stating she is misusing the codes, and that their linguistic exchanges should be negotiated within the mutual respect of the “corda civile” discourse: “Non è questo, signora mia. Vuol che gliela spieghi io, la cosa com’è? Lo strumento è scordato” (I, iv). As a result of his constant implicit attempts to warn Beatrice not to execute her plans while at the same time doing so out of context within the civil paradigm, Ciampa can also be perceived as being forced to oscillate between two communicative plateaus. A surface level regulated by the “corda civile” which attempts to dissuade politely, as in Ciampa’s exchanges with Fifi (which are really intended to be understood by Beatrice): “Ma se questa è la vita, signor Fifi! Conservare il rispetto della gente, signora! Tenere alto il proprio pupo – quale ci sia –” (I, iv); and a sub-textual one of belligerent threat implicating the activation of the “corda pazza,” the paradigm of madness which would justify actions (like murder) considered illegal within the civil paradigm: “Che se poi non mi riesco in nessun modo, sferro, signora, la corda pazza, perdo la vista degli occhi e non so più che faccio!” (I, iv). Thus his linguistic exchanges with the female character are attempts to communicate on two levels (implicit advice/quasi-explicit warning) with as much deference as the “corda civile” accords him under the circumstances.

Interestingly enough, there is a curious parallelism at work in Beatrice’s and Ciampa’s use of language which furthermore attests to the dialectical struggle between the need to create fictions (Ciampa) and the forces of entropy which threaten them (Beatrice). On the one hand, throughout her dealings with Ciampa Beatrice oscillates between the disclosure and concealment of the alleged adultery in order to punish her husband, while Ciampa’s exchanges with her, on the other, reveal an undulation between friendly advice and warning so as to protect her from herself. While she is bent on destroying the politics of appearance in society so as to make the public humiliation of adultery conventionally lawful, he, operating within a rigid system of behavior, is inclined toward maintaining the politics of appearance intact. This dialectic is a further indication of how the text reinforces the transitory fictions on the basis of which we act, and the ways we use them to shape our world views.
Operating further within a framework of implicit and explicit warnings, Ciampa recalls his own previous assertion that without the social chords we would all eat each other (“ci mangeremmo tutti”). Significantly, he qualifies the latter statement by evoking the anti-belligerency function of social chords, paradoxically adopting a military metaphor, “guerra” (war): “La guerra è dei pupi: il pupo-marito e la pupa-moglie (emphasis mine). Dentro si strappano capelli, si vanno con le dita negli occhi: appena fuori però, si mettono a braccetto: corda civile lei, corda civile lui” (I, iv). And more emphatically: “Ma se questa è la vita, signor Fifi! Conservare il rispetto della gente, signora! Tenere alto il proprio pupo – quale si sia – per modo che tutti facciano sempre tanto di cappello!” (I, iv). It is this agonistic and self-preserving image of the puppet which Ciampa, however unsuccessfully, is attempting to impress upon the female protagonist. Essentially he is enigmatically referring to her own fictional-type existence with the absent Cavalier Fiorica while implicitly warning her that if she continues to compromise the game of mutual respect and insists on double-entendre, he will be compelled to turn on the “corda pazza,” which ultimately leads to a tragic unleashing of a Dionysian chaos. His discourse, therefore, infers how life, however problematic, aspires to structure, an order which can only be achieved through fictional re-configurations of experience.

In act two Ciampa’s secret is disclosed, and as a consequence, the male protagonist “turns the tables” on Beatrice by having her play the puppet, the existence of which she ardently refused to acknowledge. He forces her to role-play the madwoman, thus constructing for her a literary persona as a form of punishment for destroying his puppet.

Once more, the stage directions offer a vivid description with regard to Ciampa’s demeanor after the fact: “Ciampa entra per la comune, cadaverico, con l’abito e la faccia imbrattati di terra; la fronte ferita, il colletto sbottonato; la cravatta sciolta, e gli occhiali in mano” (II, iv). The word “fronte” carries much significance here as it recalls one of Ciampa’s previous speeches regarding the fact that an unblemished forehead signifies a clean reputation: “... metto le mani avanti. Le metto avanti, perché la fronte io me la voglio portare sana, libera – sgombra” (I, iv). Ostracized from his familiar doxastic world, he threatens to act violently: “Io dico qua, con la massima calma, testimonio lei, testimoni tutti, che questa sera stessa, o domani, appena mia moglie ritorna a casa, io con l’accetta le spacco la testa! E non ammazzo soltanto lei. Ammazzo anche lui, il signor cavaliere” (II, iv). This belligerent discourse recalls furthermore Ciampa’s previous allusion to open windows and closed doors.

As mentioned previously, the reference to open windows represents Ciampa’s private altruism in offering his wife an illusion of freedom. Closed doors, however, signify the public duty of the strict husband performing the token ritual of quelling any suspicions of his awareness of conduct unbecoming of his wife. Let us cite the familiar (and previous) example which qualifies Ciam-
pa's politics of the private/public dichotomy informing marital and social relations: “L'uomo considera la donna che ha bisogno di prender aria alla finestra; la donna considera l'uomo che ha l'obbligo di chiudere la porta” (I, iv). Beatrice, however, opened these doors to expose Ciampa's shame as a conscious cuckolded husband. Keeping in mind how fictions regulate inner rage by keeping us all from eating each other, as Ciampa suggests, it seems obvious that the metaphoric significance behind the role-playing puppet resides in its reference to the adjustment of human emotions and to the controlling of contingency; for without the purposive nature of a fictional construct the chaos of life cannot be disciplined, and in Ciampa's case, leads to the consideration of murder.

However, as it so often occurs in Pirandello's fictional universe, chance alters life's inevitability. Ciampa hinges on the alleged madness which prompted Beatrice to cause the scandal — "Per una pazzia, per una pazzia, Ciampa" — and constructs for her a fiction within which she must operate. Ciampa says to Beatrice: “Ha dato di volta a lei il cervello, signora mia! Scusi, l'ha riconosciuto suo fratello Fifi; lo riconosce il Delegato; la sua mamma; lo riconosciamo tutti: e dunque lei è pazza! Pazza, e se ne va al manicomio” (II, iv). Thus, because Beatrice unknowingly transgressed the aesthetically-oriented rules of life and language, she herself has unwittingly become a victim of those same rules, being forced to embrace the artificial, yet self-preserving puppet and discourse of madness in order to justify her own actions, keep her marriage intact, impose order upon chaos, and re-legitimate Ciampa's existence. The theatricalization of madness and Ciampa's re-capturing of his fictional construct of respectability, in the final analysis, inexorably reinforce the idea that to live within a human community is to espouse fictions.

The explicit portrayal of role-playing in Il gioco delle parti offers the opportunity to see how this drama "of tricks, stratagems, bluffs, and masquerading" (Bassanese 57) thematizes the inherent ludic pattern of life and the legitimizing strategies of fiction-making. Similar to Il berretto a sonagli in its portrayal of power struggle, a dialectic is operating here as well: the opposition between a fictitious microcosm which ensures absolute control over, and detachment from, life (Leone's symbolic control over the egg), and an aspiration toward a whimsical and spontaneous way of life (Silvia), both played out within a context of ambiguous role-playing.

The object/symbol which signifies Leone's mastery over contingency is the egg, which the character enlivens with metaphoric significance in an effort to demonstrate how life needs to be thwarted and sucked of its contents, and hence controlled. Consequently, stripped of its precariousness, life's unpredictable games are no longer an obstacle to our unyielding search for self-preservation. Moreover, the egg is a symbol of Leone's rationally constructed fiction of aloofness from the world. As will be illustrated, this detachment from the
stress of the actual world denotes Leone’s ability to operate on the basis of meanings (cooking, philosophizing) by which he stipulates his own world and rejects all external meanings deriving from the actual world.

As a symbol of Leone’s ability to anticipate life’s games, the egg connotes his capacity to decompose, like the humorist he is, Silia’s and Guido’s treacherous plot to have him killed. Treating both Silia and Guido as incarnations of contingency symbolized by the egg, he says to his wife: “Eh tu non mi vieni più addosso, cara, perchè io ti prenda, ti foro, e ti beva” (I, iii). And while attempting to articulate the life-egg analogy, he says to Guido, “Per darti una nuova immagine dei casi e dei concetti. Se non sei pronto a ghermirlo, te ne lascerai cogliere o lo lascerai cadere. Nell’uno e nell’altro, ti si squarquererà davanti o addosso. Se sei pronto, lo prendi, lo fori, e te lo bevi” (I, iii). Likewise, Leone has stripped himself of all worldly concerns and emotions just as he sucks and disregards an egg after having emptied it of its life-source. Therefore, in these last two dialogic exchanges Leone articulates his particular brand of self-preservation as that which attempts to strip any situation of its power. Accordingly the egg is a metaphor for the game of life (“il giuoco”) which Leone ominously alludes to with his egg-life analogy: Leone: “Ah, triste cosa, caro mio, quando uno ha capito il giuoco.” Guido: “Che giuoco?” Leone: Mah... anche questo qua. Tutto il giuoco. Quello della vita” (I, iii). Clearly both life and egg share a similar symbolism as they are both metaphors for games and for our attempts to master them. Games must be understood and conquered. Consequently, just like a game must be first understood in order to be mastered, so an egg, in order to be enjoyed, must be either drunk, or, as Leone’s actions illustrate in the second act, transformed into batter. In essence, an egg must be controlled and its matter redistributed in the same way Leone will control Guido and Silia when assigning them the roles which they believe are going to favor their cause and for which they go to great lengths to secure: Leone: “Ciascuno la sua, fino all’ultimo; e stai pur sicuro che dal mio permio io non mi muovo, avvena che può. Mi vedo e vi vedo giocare, e mi diverto. Basta” (II, iii).

Unlike Ciampa’s metaphors which have the effect of decreasing emotional distance between himself and Beatrice in an effort to communicate the moral implications of the latter’s plot, Leone’s egg metaphors serve to increase significantly the emotional distance between himself and those wishing to harm him. In fact, Leone can rightly rely on the fact that Guido is so detached from his (Leone’s) modus vivendi, that the latter will not understand that he himself is like a fragile egg in Leone’s hands. Thus, in subsequent exchanges between Leone and Guido where the former will be pretending to play along with the latter’s game, but in essence will be controlling the situation, Guido will have no clue that he is being served a counter-ruse. This distancing strategy enacted within role-playing and metaphoric talk, in essence, will serve to disengage Leone from Silia’s and Guido’s plot and ensure his final triumph.
The importance of Act Two is its illustration of how Leone’s detection and ultimate undermining of Silia’s plot is a reminder of his egg metaphors in the preceding act. Most importantly, however, in the opening scene the egg is also a metaphor for Leone’s ability to inhabit a world of his creation. Markedly, the first scene opens with Leone beating egg batter as a visual reminder of his organized existence. The focus is on the beating of the batter within the context of Leone’s self-made world. Accordingly, absorbed exchanges between him and his manservant, Filippo, reveal a self-imposed exile into a microcosm of cooking and philosophizing which excludes all else. The presence of Guido, a reminder of the real world, of erratic impulses and of his estranged wife’s plot, serves only a token interest for Leone as he is consumed in rationalizing existence. Interestingly enough, disregarding, and even toying with Guido’s limited intelligence, Leone flaunts his intellectual acumen by engaging Filippo in a debate about Bergsonian philosophy, thereby completely boycotting Guido’s presence, and with it, the real world.

Furthermore, whether a symbol of his mastery over life, or a representation of his rigid textuality, Leone’s affinity to, and comments on, the egg reveal an unavoidable paradox: The theatrical disregarding of it in the first act is a reminder of his mastery over contingency, yet his obsessive attraction to it as an object of cooking at the beginning of the second act suggests his enclosure within a world of his own making. He embraces it in order to signify his existence as a philosopher-cook, yet he can easily drink it and disregard it as the symbolism behind his exchanges with Silia and Guido makes abundantly clear. In this paradoxical relationship with the egg is mirrored Leone’s fiction as that which affords him the ability to live within a world of his own meaning which in turn shields him from the contingency of the outside world represented by Silia and Guido. Moreover, the life-generating qualities of the egg have inspired human cultures to perceive it as a symbol of perfection, power, and as the container of high intelligence. Not surprisingly, this perfection of the egg is highly symbolic of the nature of Leone, for it represents his disciplined intellect, an ability to contain his emotions and his fiction of self-preservation and ultimately, a calculated, aesthetic existence which concedes to him the power to detach himself from human contingency.

The efficacy of this calculated existence is verified in Leone’s absolute withdrawal from les affaires du monde. Romano Luperini’s comments are particularly pertinent with regard to Leone’s rational detachment from the world: “Pure lui proviene da un fallimento (quello del suo rapporto coniugale con Silia) e ha scelto la soluzione dell’ indifferenza e del guardar vivere cercando scampo in un lucido razionalismo che espunge i sentimenti” (85). In difference to Ciampa’s quasi-overt rationalizations of his puppet, Leone’s extenuations of his fiction are more subtle. He is not overtly consumed by the fear of his puppet crumbling as he himself embraces a construct of total indifference which con-
cedes to him the ability to role-play, as a fictional character, within a predictable textuality from which he observes life as an outsider. Therefore, what for Ciampa was a precariously and quasi-paranoid modus operandi — let us recall the stage directions signifying his initial entrance and Fana’s remarks upon seeing him after the fact: “Madre di Dio! Un morto è!” — role-playing and fiction-making for Leone constitute a predictable and calculated modus vivendi. To varying degrees, however, just as Beatrice’s scandal invaded the puppet-like existence of Ciampa, so will Silia’s misguided ruse challenge, but not totally shatter, Leone’s construct of “non-involvement” (Pocknell 27).

Pitted against Leone’s impenetrable mask is Silia’s boredom which translates in her desire to kill her husband in order to be free of his presence, which, as she claims, suffocates her (I, i). In Act One she plans a ruse with her unwilling lover once the unforeseen opportunity offers itself by the hurling of an egg out of the window. What is meant to hit Leone, opportunistically lands on four drunkards. Thus the egg, serving the functional role of setting the plot in motion, also becomes the symbol of Silia’s ostensible control over the situation while concurrently symbolizing the unpredictability of life which Leone was moments ago articulating to Guido. Consequently, the situation engendered by the hurling of the egg will serve to demonstrate Leone’s thesis of his mastery over emotions, his ability to detect deception, and his achievement of self-preservation.

In Act One Silia takes full advantage of the opportunity the egg has given. She attempts to entice the drunkards who have confused her for a prostitute by role-playing the mischievous call-girl. Significantly, Silia’s provocations take the form of “role-playing-within-the-role”.19 She recreates herself four times in order to obtain the proof that will force Leone to duel, and hopefully, die for her honor: she plays the role of director who orchestrates the ruse; within the latter role she plays the prostitute who entices the men; she in turn plays a stripper who promises to dance in the moon-light; and finally she plays the innocent victim in front of the townspeople whose presence she herself requested in order to have the alleged assault witnessed. The purposive results of Silia’s controlled role-playing are indisputable when we consider the self-legitimizing virtues of fiction-making and when we recall moreover Plato’s definition of fiction-making’s ability to impose a sense of control and purpose upon experience. In this light, Silia’s performance demonstrates how theatrical self-creation temporarily extinguishes powerlessness and ascribes us with control. In point of fact, Silia’s entire dilemma, like Beatrice’s before her, is her lack of power and sense of worthlessness which she feels are suffocating her: “Soffoco,” she yells out to Guido in the opening scenes of the first act. And when asked what she would do if freed from Leone, she says “ricca ... padrona di me ... libera” (I, i). Thus her role-playing production which will temporarily subvert Leone’s control and offer her the power she desires reminds us that this power will be attained within a virtual framework of fictional world-making.
Let us recall Eco’s definition of “carnival” and “play” as “authorized” forms of social “transgression,” where the participants creating the fiction violate certain social codes in an attempt to exact control over their lives, and in doing so, temporarily escape from the strictures of everyday life. Within her own role-playing world Silia is also transgressing the rules of the static world to which she believes Leone has condemned her. Analogous to the Saturnalia festivals of Classical Rome which stipulated a topsy-turvy world where subordinates ruled their masters, Silia’s performance signifies an attempt to acquire control and circumvent the rules of her master (Leone). Ultimately, in fictionalizing ourselves, we achieve legitimation in the same way Silia procures temporary control over her life, envisioning virtual possibilities and experiencing alternative “selves.”

Hence, even in Silia’s role-playing we are able to detect how fiction serves as a self-legitimating structure which imposes sense upon lived experience.

In Act Two the dialectical struggle between Leone and Silia is fully actualized. This dialectic is enhanced by the egg metaphor which now becomes a reminder of Leone’s mastery over the situation. Consequently, Silia, unable to decode Leone’s ambiguously calculated discourse, and moreover believing herself to be the ultimate player, is in actuality, the played.

Leone is told of the assault, but immediately detects a ruse from the way both Silia and Guido haphazardly confront him (Leone: “Il miracolo è qua, è qua: in questa testolina che ha potuto capire codesta tua prudenza... che tu l’avresti compromesa, se ti fossi mostrato” (II, iii)). Incredulously sarcastic, Leone doesn’t attribute rational thinking to Silia. Therefore he knows that Silia cannot play effectively the game of life, as the latter requires a “philosophy of non-involvement” (Pocknell 27) and a perpetual existence within a defined fiction. From the evidence given by Silia’s erratic role-playing performance in front of Miglioritti, it is clear that she is conditioned by irrational impulses and consequently cannot remain within one stable fiction. As a matter of fact, Leone attests to Silia’s inability to know the many selves which make up her personality: “Piena d’infelicità, perchè piena di vita. E non d’una sola: di tante: Nessuna però, che riesca a trovare il suo pernio” (I, iii). Leone now ominously assigns them all their parts while casually underscoring the ludic nature of life:

Tutta ... gravissima ... Io so! Ti compiango! Ma tu devi fare la tua parte, com’io la mia. Il giuoco è questo. L’ha capito finanche lei! Ciascuno la sua, fino all’ultimo; e stai pur sicuro che dal mio pernio io non mi muovo, avvenga che può. Mi vedo e vi vedo giocare, e mi diverto. Basta. (II, iii)

Dramatic irony is particularly elevated by the above exchanges because while Silia believes to be playing Leone for a fool, he is serving her a ruse. Furthermore, when Guido seems to “flounder” (Pocknell), Leone provokes him even further to orchestrate the duel while outlining the virtue of the latter’s
duty as a second (the friend standing up for the dueler). Therefore Leone’s self-preservation strategy is his mastery of the game of life; in essence, it is the ability to detect ambiguity and to suck life of its precariousness as his egg symbolism in the first act indicates. Essentially the entire configuration of the action in the second act is a dramatic actualization of the egg metaphor: Leone is, in essence, applying upon an actual situation both the egg and game metaphor to which he was referring in the first act, thereby reinforcing his thesis of anticipating life’s games, as well as achieving self-preservation through fiction. In the same manner with which he pretended to disregard the egg after having mimetically sucked it of its contents, he now thwarts and disregards Silia’s plot.

In Act Three the metaphor of the egg as Leone’s anchor to his fictitious world and self-preservation achieves an unregulated dramatic expression as it serves as a reminder of his triumph over his detractors. Avoiding the duel on the grounds that Silia forfeited her honor at the moment she took a lover whose interjections in the orchestrated assault she herself impeded, Leone is victorious, assigning everyone, as Ciampa before him, the final roles: “Vi ho puniti,” he says to Silia, who at this point re-assumes her role of estranged wife.

Leone, however, has undergone a change which significantly expresses the play’s sub-text: Although the creation of fiction is an alternative to life, life itself is able to threaten indiscriminately any human construct, endangering our masks (puppet) and our concepts of perfection (egg), making us vulnerable to feelings of emotion and rage. It is precisely this condition which afflicts Leone at the end of the third act. Again, the stage directions reveal a tell-tale sign: “venendole sopra con l’aria e l’impero e lo sdegno di fierissimo giudice”/“l’ha presa per un braccio, respingendola lontano.” Violent actions reflecting rage from a Pirandellian icon symbolizing mastery over human passion.

Bearing in mind that the premise of this study was to illustrate the legitimating and self-fulfilling virtues of fiction-making vis-à-vis experience, the following can be said with regard to _Il berretto a sonagli_ and _Il giuoco delle parti_. It is in the act of subverting the self-legitimating structures of fiction, the necessity of which they claim to uphold, that both texts ultimately underscore the importance of fictional world-making, thereby inexorably exemplifying Pirandello’s humoristic vision. Ciampa’s symbolic use of puppets and chords, the clash between his inner and outer self brought about as a result of the clash between his doxastic world and Beatrice’s fiction of power, his opaque word-playing and his role-distributing power, all demonstrate the power of artistic self-creation, but the very existence of self-validating fictions, it seems, can only be validated when put to the test, when temporarily challenged.

Similarly the egg, which evolved from a theatrical prop into a metaphor for Leone’s mastery over contingency and for his rational exile into a personal microcosm, is, in essence, ultimately threatened, thereby further challenging
the validity of its creator’s fiction. Ergo, only by virtue of the initial creation, midway challenge, and subsequent rebirth of our imaginary self-imposed constructs does Pirandello ultimately communicate his aesthetic vision of lived experience and the life-preserving function of fiction.

It is in the sense of dramatizing this aesthetic vision with its ludic patterns of role-playing and word-playing that these plays are simulacra of the ethical struggle to maintain illusions in life, underscoring “the role played by fiction-making in our daily construction of, and participation in, reality” (Foust 5) and articulating our on-going attempts at self-preservation. It is precisely in Luigi Pirandello’s ability to have demarcated successfully both the aesthetic topography of fragmented life and its unswerving aspiration towards an at-times precarious textuality for which the Sicilian writer is, in the final analysis, known and praised.

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NOTES

1 For an examination of the adultery theme as a surface element, I refer the reader to Julie Dashwood’s study of the following plays: Il piacere dell’onestà (1918), Come prima meglio di prima (1921), Questa sera si recita a soggetto (1930), Come tu mi vuoi (1930) and Trovarsi (1932).

2 I borrow this term from Ronald E. Foust’s examination of the “game-text” theory. When a writer foregrounds the processes of literary creation as the theme of the text itself, the latter becomes a metaphor for the human need of imposing order upon the implicit chaos in life. Thus, in thematically foregrounding its own processes of literary creation, the text creates a parallel between itself and the reader in the real world, communicating to the latter the need to emulate the certainty of the textual universe. This certainty is known as “textuality”: Thus, textuality “implies that the deepest value judgement that a writer can make” is “the judgement that the entropic structurelessness of natural experience aspires to the condition of fiction”(9). In reference to Il berretto a sonagli and Il giuoco delle parti both Leone and Ciampa are representations of this need to construct fictions by means of which chaos is temporarily extinguished.

3 Possible worlds theories of literature argue that all fictional texts are semiotic systems which call into being possible states of affairs the nature of which are not actualized, that is, the fictional world, or worlds, created by the text are not a priori events, therefore, they do not refer to, nor depend for their meanings on, actual states of affairs in the world of everyday experience. Thus a possible worlds theory of literature views fictional texts, and the entities of which they are comprised, as autotelic in nature, informed by their own doxastic worlds and discourses. Since the plays under discussion exploit world-generating strategies (such as role-playing-within-roles; word-playing; theatricalizing emotions), the term microcosm, referring as it does to the idiosyncratic worlds created by the characters, seems to connote the existence of multiple possible fictional worlds operating within the central world frames of the dramatic texts. For further discussion on possible worlds theory with respect to fictional texts, I refer the reader to Lubomir Doležel 1980; 1989;1998.

4 Keeping in mind the identity-generating aspect of role-playing, my analysis of Il berretto a sonagli will illustrate how Ciampa, through his own projection of a mask, wants to preserve and perpetuate his illusory persona of “respected husband,” while Beatrice concurrently as-
pires to re-capture, through a deceptive use of language, some sense of control over her otherwise haphazard life. Similarly, in *Il giuoco delle parti* Leone Gala wants to preserve himself within a predictable character-type existence, and his estranged wife, Silia, wants, like Beatrice, freedom which can only be achieved by role-playing and fictionalizing.

5 For instance, the old lady image in the *L'umorismo* essay: In concealing her inner identity she plays at being young by virtue of the comfortable artifice of youth she dons. Realizing the many layers of which the phenomenon is made, we consequently realize how this person (old lady) has created a fictitious version of herself in order to make sense of her life. Incidentally, Pirandello places significant emphasis on the “sentimento del contrario” paradigm because it is precisely through it that lived experience is revealed to be more humoristic, and hence, fictional.

6 The situation of Vittangelo Moscarda (*Uno, nessuno e centomila*) is a prime example attesting to this paradox. Moscarda is overwhelmed by the realization of the many layers of fiction with which he is constructed. But when he de-constructs the fictions in order to find his true “self,” all he discovers is a phantasm, a mere projection into nature. Without the legitimating fictions of his past life, Moscarda “becomes” the negation of the selves he once knew and against which he struggled. It seems that true self-knowledge is only possible through artifice.

7 In her article “Character and Discourse from Pirandello to Fellini: Defining a Countertradition in an Italian Context,” Gieri observes that the humorist probes beneath surface realities (which are essentially framed constructions within which we operate) in an effort to underscore the aesthetic layers covering painful truths: “According to Pirandello, to unmask the lie, and thus to denounce the fictionality of the frame or at least to challenge its constractive boundaries both in a social and in a literary text becomes imperative for the ‘umorista’” (44). This unmasking of pretense is precisely what occurs to the fictional “frames” of both Ciampa and Leone by the unwarranted interferences of Beatrice and Silia.

8 “Textuality” refers to a fictional reality within which Pirandello’s characters encounter the safe haven given to them by literary constructs and masks. It is a place where meaning is anchored to rigid constructs and therefore adds significance and purpose to life.

9 Romano Luperini makes several poignant observations with regard to Pirandello’s concept of “riflessione.” Among the most noteworthy which seem to echo most critical interpretations, is that “La strada della riflessione è invece quella della scomposizione” (52).

10 Brian Pocknell’s assertion that “*Il giuoco delle parti* has been most usefully placed in a category [...] with the metaphor of the game” (25), also applies to *Il berretto a sonagli*: This play is informed by a rather high, if very much implicit, dose of linguistic play. Thus at the level of the “game,” the differences between the two plays is the degree of explicitness (*Il giuoco delle parti*) and implicitness (*Il berretto a sonagli*) with which the “game metaphor” is treated.

11 Regarding the notion of “game metaphor,” Alfonso Procaccini writes: “to act out one’s life according to the game metaphor is to understand one’s self in terms of the ‘part,’ or better, ‘the performance’ one gives” (57). Likewise, the “game metaphor” connotes the awareness that we are playing a role and are able to maintain it and criticize it. This definition seems to apply to Ciampa’s references to his own puppet-like existence since his references to the latter disclose the inherent theatricality with which he confronts life in general. That the puppet becomes the metaphor for his control over life’s precariousness and for his fiction of unsuspecting cuckolded husband is a further indication of the importance of fiction-making.

12 Concerning the Sicilian males’ attitude towards proper marital conduct, I refer the reader to Leonardo Sciascia’s book, *Pirandello e la Sicilia*. Briefly, Sciascia defines the Sicilian code of conduct as the “morale sessuale,” which is, in essence, a belief espoused by the husband maintaining that improper sexual conduct, such as overt “flagrant,” ought to be the knowledge of the conjugal pair, and not be publicly disclosed by an outsider. Once the male is socially humiliated, as is Ciampa later on the second act, he must, in accordance with the code, publicly avenge his honor by killing both his wife and her lover in an effort to avoid being labeled a “cuckolded” husband.

13 Paolo Puppa offers an insightful observation with regard to Ciampa’s linguistic acumen which
underscores his puppet philosophy: "Ciampa si è conquistato il diritto a tenere discorsi impiegativi, assunti filosofici, che po-trebbbero agevolmente essere firmati dal suo creatore" (78).

14 The puppet as "imitation of man"; man as imitation of the puppet denoting the "dehumanizing" aspect of individual experience; the psychological level of man as creator of his own puppet; and finally, the philosophical level, "the puppet represents the artist's imaginative creation" (28-29).

15 Notwithstanding Beatrice's shortsightedness regarding Ciampa's politics of appearance, her plan of revenge was executed with precision and strategy. Beatrice's strategizing ("A tutto, a tutto ho pensato, anche a lui") enforced by the text in her meeting with La Saracena and in the pretext on which she sends Ciampa to Palermo to buy the "collana" indicates that she is considerably sane. Her "hysterical" performance at the end of act two ("No! Sono pazza? E debbo gridarglielo: Bèèè! Bèèè! Bèèè!") is an indication of not only her neurotic nature with which the text familiarizes us, but also of the lengths and risks she has already taken in order to ridicule an unfaithful husband. Put another way, if ridiculing her husband by publically exposing him as an unfaithful spouse is contingent upon her "losing control," then being labeled "mad" is a risk she blindly takes. Let us not forget the risks she has already taken: alienation from family and friends; risking her reputation with the town gossip La Saracena; risking the security of two lives, her husband's and Nina's, Ciampa's wife. Accordingly, placing the assertion of adultery in Beatrice's mouth and having her theatricalize it within the frame of hysteria is the text's stipulation of a world based on the politics of the appearance of truth. In such a world "truth" is in the privy of the sane and its discrediting (its falsification) is in the privy of the insane. In fact, this is what Ciampa and family members are hoping for when Beatrice unwittingly performs for them and the town: To offer all members involved an ante-dote for having upset the delicate balance of social order by creating a context/pretext for them to prove that she is a raving lunatic, thereby discrediting her version of the truth. In her performance the truth becomes a parody of itself therefore, which, even though signifying a personal truth for Beatrice, becomes false at the level of public consumption. Herein lies the tragedy of Beatrice and of all Pirandellian characters: The espousal of a truth that rings true only for he or she who possesses it. Thus, through Beatrice's impromptu performance (and that is all it is, a performance) Pirandello makes us perceive the opposite (demented) of what Beatrice really is (sane with hysterical moments). The playwright obscures the relationship between sanity and insanity by introducing a character who seems to possess, but does not adhere to, either one. Moreover, the frenzied nature delineating Beatrice is not madness, as Maggie Günsberg implies, but is simply hysteria, and both madness and hysteria, she claims, should be seen in the context of those dramatic works in which Pirandello reinforces "cultural perceptions" of both (Günsberg, "Hysteria" 32). Günsberg's madness/hysteria distinction is significant because Beatrice is seen as hysterical at the beginning of the play when the curtain rises to unveil her as "pallida, isteria, tutta furie e abbattimenti subitanei" (361). To make Beatrice ipso facto mad at the end of the play is to miss the point entirely, namely, that it is essentially problematic to arrive at a universally valid truth when this truth is governed by the politics of appearance.

16 While I concur with Brian Poockell's claim that the egg denotes "Leone Gala's mastery over life's attacks on the emotions," I disagree that the egg connotes cooking as "the ballast that holds Leone firmly in the real world" (31). The egg symbolism connotes a measure of control which Leone exercises over a world of his own creation. Involvement and a firm hold in the actual world of Silia and Guido would imply that Leone is clinging to some hope of experiencing the erratic emotions they are and of partaking of the unpredictability existing in the real world. Emotions and unpredictability, however, are despised by Leone, who repeatedly reproaches his manservant, Filippo, for experiencing them. At the beginning of the second act, he says: "sei diventato così deplorevolmente umano, che non ti riconosco più." The fact that Leone is later forced to enter into the real world and ultimately experiences emotions of hate which drive him to punish both Guido and Silia is a clear indication of his uncomfortable involvement in the real world. Leone's mathematically calculated actions, such as his regular
visits to Silia and the re-acquisition of his quasi non-human comportment after the death of Guido and his artful attachment to cooking, all suggest total withdrawal from life, as well as the creation of a personal microcosm. And when he ultimately experiences -- the very controlled emotions -- at the end of the play, they are un-welcomed, and the negative effects on the character are evident. To make the egg therefore, an additional metaphor for a wishful connection to life, is to strip inexorably Leone of his Stoic and predictably aloof stature which he dons so well. The egg is thus a metaphor for Leone’s attachment to his own world-version which, however ostensibly rooted in cooking, acquires the significance of a personal and detached “heterocosm” which serves to preserve a distance from, and not an attachment to, the world. Thus the egg is indeed a metaphor for “Leone’s mastery” over the contingent, as Pocknell argues, but, precisely on account of this very fact, it is consequently a symbol of his detached, well-preserved, and predictably autonomous life which ultimately extinguishes the actual world.  

17 For a discussion on the anti-Bergsonian vein running through this play with reference to the way in which Leone Gala typifies a paradoxical rejection and confirmation of Bergson’s notion of the primacy of instinct over intellect, see Patrizio Rossi’s “Bergson and Pirandello’s ‘Il giuoco delle parti’.”  

18 The Ancient Egyptians believed it to be the “content for matter and for thought” (94), as well as “the determinative sign of [...] potentiality” (94). And the Easter egg within the Christian paradigm “is an emblem of immortality” (94). See Cirlot.  

19 The term denotes the successive layers of fictions which temporarily cancel the previous ones they replace. For a detailed analysis of this meta-dramatic device, see Homby 67-87.  

20 Not surprisingly, Silia’s role-playing recalls the group of actors in Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore, who, in attempting to assume the fictional identities of the six characters, themselves become fictionalized, experiencing a virtual reality foreign to their nature.  

21 Not operating within one stable fictional construct or role is similar to not possessing a permanent identity. This multifarious aspect of Silia’s personality is wonderfully examined by Pierrette Lavanchy in an article entitled “La disidentità nel Giuoco delle parti.” The author observes that Leone, who is characterized by “disidentità,” is victorious at the end of the play because he is able to disassociate himself from all forms of identities, whereas Silia, suffering from what the author calls “un eccesso di coerenza mentale,” is unable to be in a fixed form, and therefore unwittingly betrays her intentions by believing that she can fool Leone: “La mia ipotesi è infatti che Silia abbia fallito per eccesso di coerenza mentale, per incapacità di immaginare la scappatoia dell’avversario, per una visione rigidamente identitaria del concetto di parte; e che Leone invece si sia salvato per aver saputo evadere dall’identità di marito in cui si era rinchiuso, o se si vuole, per aver barato. Silia è rimasta ingabbiata nell’identità, Leone si è salvato per disidentità” (175).  

22 In Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore, the “capocomico” explicitly states while rehearsing Il giuoco delle parti that Silia represents instinct, while Leone, reason.

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